

Cancel All Power Trips

How to revolt from within

Audre Lorde said it best: "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." We women struggle for equality in our lives, yet we operate within fundamentally unequal structures. It's time for a hierarchy-bashing feminist revolution. Though there are many ways to practice your feminism, undoing power structures "at home" has worked wonders for us at Bluestockings, the women's bookstore collective I founded in New York City. Here are some tips for creating a feminist-friendly space:

- Involve your entire group in writing a mission statement. Amend it as your project develops.
- Hold structured meetings with a rotating facilitator.
- Set a time limit for meetings and discussion sessions.
- Always let someone who has not spoken talk before someone who has.
- For major decisions, vote using a consensus model that requires everyone to agree on an outcome that is best for the

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project. And remember that smaller decisions can be left to individuals.

- Test the impact of tough decisions with trial periods.
- Let each person choose her own role and title. Then regroup and collectively agree upon who should do what and expectations for each role.
- Rotate leadership positions.
- Keep stirring the pot: cosponsor projects with communities you don't already attract. And broaden your issues to diversify your following.
- We all have something to teach, as well as something to learn, so provide equal access to skills and knowledge.
- Do away with cut-throat office politics and celebrate together: birthdays, holidays, whatever.

—Kathryn G. Welsh



Sayeda Abdou Hamed holds a workshop for rural women in southern Egypt.

Multi-Tasking

Egyptian women band together to eradicate FGM

THE DOGS MAY BARK, BUT THE caravan keeps going." That's Sayeda Abdou Hamed's mantra when times get rough in her fight to stop female genital mutilation (FGM). Hamed, a survivor of the procedure, is a member of Egypt's FGM Task Force, a growing network that is fast becoming a movement. The task force, composed of about 80 activist groups, is united by a commitment to eliminate the practice of removing all or part of a girl's genitalia so as to guarantee her chastity and marriageability. Though the task force helped to pass a law criminalizing the practice in 1996, the law is largely unenforced and the battle

to change social attitudes continues.

The task force arose from the momentum of a 1994 United Nations population conference in Cairo. Before meetings began, CNN aired footage of a screaming Egyptian girl being held down and cut by a local barber—forcing a nation in denial to address the issue. Marie Assaad, one of the country's veteran women's rights activists, was brought in as coordinator of the task force, which was founded with the help of international human rights groups. "We wanted this to be a coalition of volunteers, activists, and professionals," says Assaad. "FGM is a human rights issue that affects everyone."